

Book Reviews

possessed by the SPR is an account of a cross-correspondence test involving Fodor, Hamilton and the medium Grace Cooke.

LESLIE PRICE

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TRANSCENDENCE. By Andrew Neher. Prentice-Hall (Spectrum Books), New Jersey, 1980. 361 pp.

This is a guide, we are told, 'to understanding and developing your potential for mental healing, visions, ecstasy, out-of-the-body states, prophecy, and many other extraordinary experiences'. It arouses first mild interest, then uneasiness, then irritation, and finally hilarity.

Andrew Neher is Professor of Psychology at Cabrillo College, an institution with which I fear I am unfamiliar. His aim, he explains in his introduction, is to bring the transcendental down to earth, for purposes of examination; not to de-bunk it but to show that transcendental experiences, 'far from being merely freakish' have inspired geniuses and could be useful for the rest of us.

Yes, indeed . . . but uneasiness arises right away, when he cites as his example of transcendental experience the episode related by the anthropologist Colin Turnbull, who almost died when witchcraft was used against him, but recovered when he 'made magic back'. All sorts of possible explanations suggest themselves; but transcendental? Hardly.

Some mildly interesting material follows, coupled with turgid observations ('falling in love' presumes a prior state of "not having fallen in love"—in other words a prior state of deprivation) before what turns out to be the main theme of the book is reached. 'There is no intrinsic relationship between transcendental experience and belief in mysterious paranormal forces', Professor Neher insists; and he proceeds to try to raise the banner of the transcendental by demonstrating that the paranormal is a load of old rubbish.

Irritation begins to mount when it becomes clear that Neher has siphoned off his misinformation from familiar channels. As his authority for rejecting the experimental evidence for psi, he actually presents Hansel; for rejecting faith healing, Louis Rose. He exploits the well-worn device of citing some of the nuttier attempts to make sense out of the more obscure quatrains of Nostradamus, while discreetly averting his attention from those which have shown resonance. And where there is a choice of authorities, he has no compunction in selecting the weakest; thus in dealing with D. D. Home he uses that notorious hack Horace Wyndham, whose *Mr Sludge the Medium* no self-respecting academic could stomach.

Hilarity breaks through, however, as the weakness of Neher's method becomes increasingly apparent, leading to intrigued speculation about what absurdity is going to come next. He finds it possible to dismiss the evidence for 'water witching' (dowsing), radesthesia, the ouija board, and table-turning in six pages. The high point comes in his section on poltergeists. There is no mention, needless to say, of any of the more respected authorities, such as Owen; no reference to the Rosenheim case. Instead he cites Trevor Hall, Milbourne Christopher and *The Amityville Horror*.

The book's illustrations are comparable awfulness; but there is quite a service-

able glossary. Among the 'A's is a word I do not recall having encountered:

'Amphigory: an impressive-sounding nonsense statement.'

That just about sums up *The Psychology of Transcendence*.

BRIAN INGLIS

STRANGE TO RELATE. By Allan Barham. New Horizon, Bognor Regis, 1980. x + 141 pp. + 6 pp. plates. £4.25

An entertainingly anecdotal book by an Anglican priest who has had a lifetime's interest in psychical research and knows many of the dramatis personae about whom he writes. He pleads that the Churches should take the subject seriously. Although paying lip-service to the need for critical assessment, he does not always heed his own advice—particularly in the chapter on 'Queen Victoria and Spiritualism' where he gives Miss Eva Lees' 'account of how her father became Queen Victoria's first medium, and how John Brown became his successor'. For the actual facts behind this pseudo-claim, see pp. 418–432 of the Pan paperback edition (1966) of Elizabeth Longford's *Victoria R. I.* which concludes that there is no shred of evidence for such remarkable rumours.

MICHAEL PERRY

THE OPEN DOOR: THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION WITH THE DEAD. By Judah Raviv. Elishar & Bros., Jerusalem, 1980. Paperback, 99 pp. (in English). No price stated.

AN INVESTIGATION OF APPARENT PARANORMAL SOUNDS OCCURRING ON ELECTRONIC RECORDING EQUIPMENT: A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY. By Patricia M. Clancy. The University for Humanistic Studies, San Diego, 1980. Typed double-spaced, photocopied and perfect bound, 48 + vii pp. 8½ × 11 inches. No price or availability stated.

Judah Raviv's very readable and quite entertaining little book deals, as the sub-title indicates, with the 'Raudive Voices' (voice extras on tape-recordings). The author has read two books on the subject, *Breakthrough* (Konstantin Raudive) and *Voices from the Tapes* (American edition of Peter Bander's *Carry on Talking*). He quotes extensively from each as well as giving details of his own recordings, made in Santa Maria, California, in May 1979 and in Jerusalem, Israel, in July and August of that year.

His attitude to the phenomenon is clearly shown in the Preface: 'One by one, various theories were advanced to explain the phenomenon only to be ultimately discarded by a process of elimination. It was at this time [between 1959 and 1964] that a theory was put forward that still stands today, namely that these voices come from a paranormal origin' (pp. 13–14). Alas, such a theory stands only in the minds of enthusiasts blind to the many simple, straightforward, technical ways in which such voices could have been recorded on their tapes, and to the psychological mechanisms involved in the subjective interpretation of indistinct sounds.